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DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

FUNERAL

OF

MRS. MEHITABEL ATWOOD,

(WIFE OF MR. JOSHUA ATWOOD)

OF

PELHAM, N. H.

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE MARCH 11, 1805, Æt. 78.

BY JOHN HUBBARD CHURCH.

O Death! where is thy sting?
For JESUS ever lives;
He conquers death, redeems his Friends,
And endless glory gives.

AMHERST:

PRINTED BY JOSEPH CUSHING.

MAY, 1805.

FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

JOHN xi. 25.

JESUS SAID UNTO HER, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE.

GREAT is the change, made by death: and painful, the separation, which then takes place between dear and beloved friends. When a saint is removed by death, his fellow-christians can no more enjoy, in this vale of tears, his society, his conversation and prayers. In this view, these words of Christ are full of comfort. They must have been very consoling to Martha on the death of her beloved Brother, Lazarus. For you will recollect the affecting occasion, on which they were uttered. Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, was dead. In the time of his illness, his sisters, Martha and Mary, sent this tender message to Christ: *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* On receiving the message, Christ said, *This sickness is not unto death*, or shall not finally issue in death, *but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.* In other words: This sickness is designed to give occasion to manifest the divine perfections, that the Son of God may be glorified. Christ did not however immediately visit Lazarus and restore him to health. And the reason appears

to be this: *Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.* Perhaps we should have judged that his peculiar affection to these persons would have led him to visit them immediately in their affliction. But he saw otherwise; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. He therefore abode two days still in the same place; and delayed visiting this afflicted family, until four days after Lazarus' death. As soon as Martha was informed that Jesus was come into Bethany, she went forth to meet him and offer her respects. In the midst of her overwhelming grief, she abruptly said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* In this address, she manifested much unbelief; as though Christ could not, at a distance, recover Lazarus from his sickness; or that, if he had been present, he would have been so moved by his distressing situation, or their intreaties, as to restore him to health. She however manifested a degree of faith in saying, *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.* To strengthen her faith, and comfort her mind, Jesus said, *Thy brother shall rise again.* Martha replied, *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* But as she did not express her faith in him, as being all-sufficient, he therefore said, to increase her faith, and raise her mind above every gloomy apprehension, *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

These words may suggest some remarks, and lead to some reflections, which may be useful on this solemn occasion.

I. Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

He is the life. He giveth life to all; for he is the Creator of all things; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that

are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. He also upholdeth all things by the word of his power. To him we are indebted for our existence and continuance in life.—But there is a more peculiar sense, in which Christ is the life: he is the fountain of spiritual life to all his people. He is called their life, denoting that it is by virtue of union with him, that they live a spiritual and divine life. He is the vine; they are the branches. By union with him, they are dead to sin, and alive to God. Saith the Apostle: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me.*

Christ quickeneth whom he will. He giveth life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. By his almighty power, and of his good pleasure, he awakens them, and shews them that they are wholly destitute of all spiritual life, and sinking into endless death. By his Spirit, he giveth a new heart, and a holy life is begun in the soul. This life he will maintain during their abode on earth, and to eternity in heaven. Saith Christ; *My sheep hear my voice; and I give unto them eternal life.*

Christ is also the resurrection. He is the efficient cause of the resurrection of the dead. By his almighty power, he will raise all the dead at the last day. Then all the millions of the human race, who are sleeping in the dust, will hear his powerful, quickening voice. He has expressly told us that "the hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;* they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." How great must be the power, which awakens and raises to life the millions of the dead throughout the earth. But the power of Christ is

equal to the work ; for he is the mighty GOD ; he is JEHOVAH. With him all things are possible.

II. We may remark on Christ's declaration that every believer, although dead, shall yet live.

Although the believer in Christ is pardoned and justified, and can never come into condemnation, yet he must die. He is subject to the various infirmities of the present life ; he may be visited with sore and distressing sickness ; and he must experience the pains of dissolving nature. His body must be consigned to the grave, and there mingle with the dust. But the believer will not always remain under the power of death. It is true that he indeed lives, with respect to his soul, his immortal part, even while his body is sleeping in the dust. No sooner does the body die, than the soul of the believer commences a very glorious state of existence. Being absent from the body, he is present with the Lord, in glorious light. He beholds JESUS, his Saviour and everlasting Friend, and rejoices in his presence with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But his happiness is not complete, while his body is in the grave. Hence Jesus will quicken the mortal bodies of believers and raise them to a glorious immortality. He will give them a complete victory over death and the grave.

We are taught in the text, that the believer will be raised to life before the general resurrection, if it be necessary, for displaying the divine perfections, and accomplishing the divine purposes, as in the case of Lazarus and others. It appears that several of the saints were raised from their graves, immediately after Christ's resurrection. Perhaps these returned to death no more, but were received to heaven with the human nature of Christ, as the first fruits, or the earnests of the future resurrection of all the saints. In due time, all shall be raised. And with

what glory will they appear in the morning of the resurrection. Death changes the countenance, which was fair, pleasant, and delightful to behold; and the body becomes loathsome; so that *Abraham must bury his beloved Sarah out of his sight.* The body is sown in corruption; but it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; but it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; but it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; but it is raised a spiritual body. As believers have borne the image of the earthly, so they will also bear the image of the heavenly. For Christ shall change their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. How glorious then will be the appearance of believers in Christ. They will all appear with him in glory. The soul will be united with a body, which will never experience any pain, sickness or dissolution; but be prepared for immortal bliss, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

HOW excellent then, we may observe, in reflecting on the subject, is Jesus Christ, in being the resurrection and the life. We have sinned, and have exposed ourselves to the vindictive curse of God's holy law; to all the pains and infirmities of this life, to the pains of death, and then to come forth to

the resurrection of damnation, and endure the wrath of God forever. But through Christ, we may be delivered from the curse of the divine law. And if we may not be exempted from pain and sickness, and the distressing separation of soul and body by death; yet being in Christ by faith, these will work for our good; and in the morning of the resurrection, we shall be raised in glory and admitted to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away.

By nature, we are dead in sin. But Christ can quicken, and raise us up to newness of life; so that instead of living in sin, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, we shall live to the glory of God. The good work which he begins in the souls of believers, he carries on and completes. He prays for his people that their faith fail not, when they are tempted, or Satan desires to have them that he may sift them as wheat. He supports the divine life in the soul, through all the pains and distresses of the present life, and even when the body is borne down with sickness and excruciating pain. In the trying and solemn hour of death, when flesh and heart fail, he is the life and strength of believers. He does not leave them in the valley of the shadow of death. But he there supports and comforts the departing spirit, so that the believer can say,

"Oh! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she pass'd.

Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

The great and primary reason why Jesus is so excellent and precious in the view of his people, is this, he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He is also exceedingly precious to them in being their life. How glorious he will appear, when he comes in the glory of the Father, with all the holy angels, and with sovereign authority calls the dead from their graves. Then every eye will behold him in his glory.

2. We may reflect on the solemn and interesting period of the resurrection. Then the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God. His almighty voice will awake the dead. How surprising, how astonishing, to behold millions rising from their graves. O joyful! O distressing day! For some will come forth to the resurrection of life, and some, to the resurrection of damnation. With what joy will pious relatives and friends address each other. How exceedingly they will rejoice to behold each other raised from the dead, their bodies changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. With what raptures of joy, they will meet the Lord in the air, to be conducted, after the judgment, to his eternal kingdom. Their souls will leap with triumphant joy when Jesus says, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Then they will be forever with the Lord; they will enjoy the society of each other; never experience any separations or bereavements, but dwell together in uninterrupted love and friendship.—But while some hail the morning of the resurrection with songs of triumphant joy; others will lament the day with the utmost anguish and deepest distress. They come forth to the resurrection of damnation. They awake to shame and ev-

erlasting contempt. As the bodies of the saints will be changed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; so the bodies of the damned will appear so awful as to be an abhorring to all flesh. Every face will gather blackness; and all the ungodly will be a terror one to another. With dreadful consternation and anguish of spirit, they must attend the judgment; have all their wickedness brought to light; be condemned before the assembled universe; and then go away into endless punishment, under this fearful, righteous sentence, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.*

3. How desirable, my brethren and friends, that we have faith in Christ. It is only by union with him, that we can enjoy the blessedness of his people. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, and to share with them in their glory and felicity at the resurrection. But this is impossible, except in this momentary life we are quickened by the Spirit of Christ, brought into a saving union with him, and changed into his moral image, from one degree of glory unto another, even by his Spirit. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.* Blessed are the dead, which die *in* the Lord.

WE trust, respected Sir, that, in your present deep affliction, you can meditate with holy joy on death and the resurrection. We hope that you have experienced the quickening power of the Redeemer, so as to be alive unto God. Is not Christ precious to you? Do you not love and rejoice in him, because he is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person? Is he not, in your view, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? Do you not know whom you have believed, and are you not persuaded that

he will keep that, which you have committed to him, until the decisive day? In view of his grace and sufficiency, is not death disarmed of its terrors? Can you not say; "*Christ is my life, my strength, my all. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*"

You now experience a sore bereavement, a painful separation. *The Wife of thy youth—the desire of thine eyes*, a beloved and affectionate partner is taken from you. While you mourn that you can no more enjoy her society in this world, give thanks to God that she was your help-meet such a length of time. How great has been God's mercy that you and your dear partner lived together in this happy, endearing relation for about sixty years. How great has been the divine goodness with respect to your offspring. There are but a very few instances, in which parents are blessed with so many children, or have so many arrive at manhood. You have had seventeen children; fourteen of them lived to upwards of thirty years of age, and thirteen are still living.* O bless the Lord for his great mercy; be

* The whole number of the descendants of Mr. Atwood and his deceased Wife amount to 97; and 81 of these are now living.—Mrs. Atwood was an affectionate, prudent, and industrious Partner. The heart of her Husband did safely trust in her, and she did him good all the days of her life. She was a very kind and tender Parent. She denied herself many hours of necessary sleep for the benefit of her Children. Her kindness, and abundant counsels they gratefully remember. She was for many years a professor of religion; and her life was truly exemplary. In her last illness, which was very distressing, she manifested great patience and submission; expressed a deep sense of her sinfulness; appeared humble, and to place her dependence on the merits and grace of Jesus Christ. In her last hours, she expressed a tender and earnest concern for the eternal welfare of her dear Children; and, by prayer, implored for them the grace of God.—May her prayers be graciously answered; and her counsels do them good to their dying hour.

submissive; be humble; be penitent; and let your mourning be turned into joy. JESUS lives, and you hope that your beloved Partner died in the Lord. You need not therefore sorrow as others who have no such hope. You know that them who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him. The night of death must come. But O how bright and joyful will be the morning of the resurrection. If you have a part in the resurrection of the just, with what raptures of joy will you meet your dear, pious relatives. How will you rejoice to be admitted with them, to behold the glory of Christ. O, look continually for his appearing. Make him your all. Be more sensible of his worthiness and allsufficiency. Be more and more weaned from this world. Continue instant in prayer. Daily bear, on your heart, your children and grand-children at the throne of grace. May they experience the fulfilment of your prayers, and be prepared to meet you in glory. May your last be your best days. And at last may you come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.

MANY reflections may arise in your minds, respected Friends, when you meditate on the death of your aged, affectionate parent. You have experienced her kind, maternal care. She has spent days of labor and fatigue, and nights of weariness and watching, to administer to your support and comfort. How great has been your debt of love and gratitude. Many years, she has been spared, that you might enjoy the benefit of her prayers, her christian counsels, and pious example. You have beheld her last distressing sickness, and have witnessed her patience and resignation. You are comforted with the hope that she knew the power and grace of Christ, and has died in the Lord.

You see the great change which death makes with respect to the body. But how much greater is the change with respect to the soul. The soul of the believer rises to glory and blessedness ; but the soul of the unbeliever sinks in despair and wretchedness. O how important to have faith in Christ. You will then find death unspeakable gain. And inconceivably great will be your joy and blessedness, to hear Christ's voice, and come forth to the resurrection of life. May you all experience this blessedness. Comfort and exhort one another with these words ; and diligently seek an inheritance with the saints in light.

YOU see, my young Friends, the certainty of death. Your aged Grand-Parent is no more in this world. With pleasure, no doubt, you have often come to this dwelling to enjoy her company, and to hear her discourse. But you can visit her no more ; nor will you again hear her speak, until the Lord shall descend with a shout, with the trump of God, and raise the dead. Although spared to an advanced period, yet the summons of death has arrived, and she has gone to the eternal world. O that you may realize the solemn event ; and be deeply sensible of your frailty. According to the usual course of divine providence, it is very unlikely that you will all live to the age of your deceased Grand-ma'am. You may soon die. And if you should be spared, you will become more and more unfit to die, except you experience the special grace of Jesus Christ. If your Grand-ma'am has died in peace, it is because her heart was previously renewed by the special grace of the Redeemer. You cannot die in peace, except you experience the same grace ; nor can you have a part in the resurrection of the just, except you now embrace the Redeemer by faith. Let it be your chief concern to have this faith. Now in early life,

be deeply sensible of your sins, and that you need the grace of Christ. O come, I beseech you come, and embrace this Saviour. Commit your souls into his hands, and wait for his salvation. Live by faith in him; and deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust. You will then enjoy his love, through all the changing scenes of life. In death, he will be your constant Friend and fill your souls with peace; and in the morning of the resurrection, he will raise you to everlasting joy and felicity.

LET all receive admonition from this solemn event. *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou must return.* When you die, shall you fall asleep in Jesus, enter into rest, and be entitled to a part in the resurrection of the just; or shall you die in your sins, be driven away in your wickedness, and at last be raised to shame and everlasting contempt, despair and torment?

My aged, respected Friends, death is certain. It is fast approaching. Are you in readiness for the solemn event? Be intreated to see that Jesus is your life; and that you are prepared for his coming and kingdom. AMEN.

THE affectionate, pious Parent taking leave of her Children.

1. IT is for you, my children dear,
Both days and nights I've spent while here:
You've been devoted to the Lord,
For you his grace has been implor'd.

2. I've sought to store your minds with truth,
And guide your steps from early youth;
From day to day, you've been my care,
And had an int'rest in my pray'r.

3. But now I take my final leave,
Till we shall meet beyond the grave,
To be receiv'd in bliss to dwell,
Or hear our doom and sink to hell.

4. Remember death ; prepare to die ;
Build not your hopes below the sky ;
But seek the joys of heav'n above,
Where all the saints will join in love.

5. Make Christ your everlasting Friend :
Daily his word in love attend :
O may we meet at last with joy,
And endless praise our tongues employ.